
CHECKLIST & TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPLICANT: Town of Oxford

NAME OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY:

Please review the checklist of attachments and furnish all of the attachments that are applicable. Contents of the notebook should be tabbed and organized as follows:

- ☐ **TAB #1 Applicant Information**
- ☐ **TAB #2 Sustainable Community Baseline Information - In addition to hard copies of the project location map, a detailed listing of parcels (i.e. Parcel ID Numbers) that form the project boundary should be included. Maps should also be submitted in electronic GIS form (shape file). If you have additional comments or questions, please contact Brad Wolters, Senior GIS Specialist, DHCD, wolters@mdhousing.org.**
- ☐ **TAB #3 Local Capacity to Implement Plans & Projects: Attach Sustainable Communities Workgroup roster noted in Section III**
- ☐ **TAB #4 Sustainable Community Plan**
- ☐ **TAB #5 Progress Measures**
- ☐ **TAB #6 Local Support Resolution**
- ☐ **TAB #7 Signed Sustainable Community Application Disclosure Authorization and Certification**

**All documents on this checklist are mandatory.
Failure to provide the requested document will automatically deny your application.**

I. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY APPLICANT INFORMATION**Name of Sustainable Community:**

Legal Name of Applicant: Town of Oxford

Federal Identification Number:

Street Address: 101 Market St., PO Box 339

City: Oxford	County: Talbot	State: MD	Zip Code: 21654
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Phone No: 410-226-5122	Fax: 410-226-5597	Web Address: www.oxfordmd.net
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Sustainable Community Contact For Application Status:

Name: Cheryl Lewis	Title: Town Administrator
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Address: 101 Market Street, PO Box 339	City: Oxford	State: MD	Zip Code: 21654
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Phone No: 4102265122 x	Fax: 4102265597	E-mail:
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Person to be contacted for Award notification:

Name: Cheryl Lewis	Title: Town Administrator
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Address: 101 Market Street, PO Box 339	City: Oxford	State: Md	Zip Code: 21654
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Phone No: 4102265122 x	Fax: 4102265597	E-mail: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
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II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

Through this section, applicants will demonstrate that trends and conditions in homeownership, property values, employment, commercial and residential vacancy, community facilities and infrastructure, natural resources, the local business and residential districts show a need for new or continued revitalization reinvestment. Demographic data and trends provided by Applicants should support the choice of the proposed Sustainable Community Area boundary and help form a basis for needs and opportunities to be addressed through the initiatives and projects described in the Sustainable Community Action Plan (Section IV).

POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL BE AWARDED BASED ON THE SC AREA'S NEED FOR REINVESTMENT AS EVIDENCED BY THOROUGH DESCRIPTIONS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS OR TRENDS (and will not be based upon current or planned revitalization activities which will be covered in Section IV).

A. Proposed Sustainable Community Area (s):

County: Talbot

Name of Sustainable Community: _____

Include boundary descriptions and a map of the Sustainable Community. In addition to hard copies of the of the project location map, a detailed listing of parcels (i.e. Parcel ID Numbers) that form the project boundary should be included. If possible, maps should also be submitted in electronic GIS form (shape file). If you have additional comments or questions, please contact Brad Wolters, Senior GIS Specialist, DHCD, Wolters@MdHousing.org

Oxford's Sustainable Community Areas consist of three targeted interest.

The first of which is the nationally registered Oxford Historic District, a district completed located on a peninsula bounded by the Tred Avon River and Town Creek, with only two parcels separating the district from the rest of the town, Map/Parcel: 0400/0455 the town owned Causeway Dock and Watermen Slips and Map/Parcel: 0400/0750 the Historic Church of the Holy Trinity, with a religious history dating back to the 1850's. There are several parcels within the Historic District that have been singled out in the Sustainability Plan as areas of need or significance including Map/Parcel: 0400/0523 The Mews, Map/Parcel: 0400/0521 Fowler Building, and Map/Parcel: 0400/058 Oxford Market, in the Oxford's Historic Commercial area; along with Map/Parcels: 0400/0611 the Historic Robert Morris Inn and Map/Parcel 0400/0679 the Historic Sandaway Waterfront Lodge; Map/Parcel: 0400/0456 the Oxford Yacht Agency; Map/Parcel: 0400/0565 the Barnaby House, and Map/Parcel: 0400/0677 the Town of Oxford's Transient Dock where the Oxford Bellevue Ferry is docked, all identified in attached pictures and SDAT sheets.

The second areas targeted are the commercial operations sprinkled throughout the remaining town, outside of the Historic District. Because of the nature of the maritime operations, these are not contiguous parcels, but are remaining commercial operations located along the waterfront, with residential infill neighborhoods that have developed over time between them. Additionally there are several commercial parcels that historically exist along Rt. 333 prior to entering the Historic District, along with a town-established industrial park consisting of privately owned parcels. All Parcels have been identified in attached pictures and SDAT sheets, with special attention given to Map/Parcel: 0400/0791 the Pier Street Restaurant and Marina.

The third targeted areas consisted of government and non-profit owned or supported properties that provide town infrastructure, emergency services, community recreation and cultural facilities. These parcels include the town's Public Works parcels, Causeway Park recreational facilities, the Oxford Community Center which is located on town owned land, the town owned affordable rental housing (which was inadvertently left off the mapping) and the Oxford Volunteer Fire Company.

Attachments include:

- Approved Sustainable Communities Area Map
- National Historic District Map and Description
- Identified Parcels Spreadsheet and SDAT sheets

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- Identified Parcels Pictures

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

Approximate number of acres within the SC Area: 162

Existing federal, state or local designations (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Legacy Area | <input type="checkbox"/> Designated Neighborhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main Street | <input type="checkbox"/> Maple Street |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Historic District | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National Register Historic District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A & E District | <input type="checkbox"/> State Enterprise Zone Special Taxing District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BRAC | <input type="checkbox"/> State Designated TOD |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other(s): _____ | |

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

Prior Revitalization Investments & Smart Growth:

(a) List and describe any significant State and local smart growth or revitalization related program investments (for instance, Community Legacy or SC Rehab Tax Credit) that have been invested in the Area since the launching of Maryland's Smart Growth initiative and programs in 1997 (including Housing investment). What impact have these investments made in the community? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

In 1988 the Commissioners of Oxford identified a need for affordable housing and employment opportunities within their community and developed several smart growth initiatives within the town, providing the funding for all three initiatives.

The first included construction of a townhouse duplex to provide housing for the Police Chief and Public Works Supervisor. Over the last few years, with the Public Works Supervisor not needing housing, the second rental has been made available to locally stationed Coast Guard members at \$800 per month. This program is win-win for the citizens and the Chief of Police, assuring available housing while guaranteeing citizens a resident law enforcement officer. The second unit has been especially successful in providing a housing opportunity to a young Coast Guard families, with the unit turning over approximately every three years with service member relocations.

The second initiative involved providing two town owned residential parcels to members of the Oxford Volunteer Fire Company who were interested in building their home, allowing the builder of the home to postpone the expense of a land purchase, reducing the startup cost of home ownership. Both of these properties are still in the hands of the original homeowners.

The third initiative established a designated Industrial Park Area, providing several available parcels to businesses owners interested in establishing a business that would provide employment opportunities for local residents. The emphasis was originally on marine specific industries, but over the years the locations have housed a variety of business types.

All these initiatives have had a positive impact within the community, but of the three, the continued rental of housing seems to provide the best opportunity for continually available affordable housing and is recognized as future area of investment for the town.

In the area of State funded revitalization, state supported grants and bonds allowed for recently completed renovations to the Oxford Community Center (OCC). This structure has served as a community resource for over 80 years, first as a grammar school and then a high school and, for the last quarter century, as a cultural activities center and meeting place. The building was designed by noted Annapolis-born architect Henry Powell Hopkins (1891-1985), who designed public buildings all over Maryland. The Oxford Community Center building is the last surviving example of this architect's work. Recently completely renovated, OCC is an award winning, LEEDS (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold certified building with state of the art geothermal HVAC, sound and lighting systems, a large auditorium, a full commercial kitchen, and several classrooms that are used and can be rented for a variety of activities. The renovations utilized the latest stormwater management techniques in its renovations, including well-planned stormwater management ponds and multiple rain barrels collecting all roof runoff. The OCC provides to residents and visitors alike a year-round schedule of social, cultural, and recreational programs and events.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(b) Describe any existing barriers to Smart Growth that may affect your jurisdiction or the proposed SC Area. For instance, does your area have higher development fees than outer “cornfields”?

(Answer Space 4,000 characters)

As identified in the Oxford Comprehensive Plan, the town's mapped growth area, includes areas that are constrained by wetlands and critical areas regulations, with the largest portion of this area having recently been placed in an easement by Talbot County and currently under design as an 86-acre passive park. This park area, along with the wetland component on the opposite side of State Road 333, creates a virtually impassable greenbelt, presenting a natural boundary to the town. Per the Comprehensive Plan, there is one remaining 12-acre parcel that could be developed in the future, but with Maryland Critical Areas LDA designation, it would still be limited to 50 or less homes. Thus the existing barrier to any future growth is simply a lack of land. All emphasis is placed on infill and revitalization.

The community does not charge any additional development fees, beyond the county established charges. The town does provide water and sewer, but due to the size of the community the monthly cost for this service is higher than rural development, although with state regulations regarding septic systems this may not have the same negative impact as in the past.

Although beneficial for tax revenue purposes, the biggest barrier to economic development and affordable housing for Oxford is the high assessments of waterfront property within the community. These residential properties were highly valued as second homes in the past economy and are underutilized or for sale at previously high assessments in the current economy. The vacant commercial properties in the Historic District suffer from virtually the same blight with out of town owners holding on to properties hoping to regain former investment dollars, while the unmaintained historic buildings steadily decline.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

B. Community Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses

(1) Describe the strengths and weaknesses in the proposed Area's existing built environment. For example, what is the condition of housing? Are there underutilized historic buildings and cultural places? What is the condition and availability of community parks and recreational assets? Are there transportation assets? What is the current condition of community infrastructure such as roads and lighting? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

As identified in the last paragraph, the biggest weakness to economic stability in Oxford is the condition of vacant and underutilized properties, both commercial and residential. There are many properties that have been on the market since the economy faltered, with property owners performing little or no maintenance. There is major concern within the community regarding a several commercial properties.

Two large buildings within the Historic Commercial area have been vacant for many years, both are virtually gutted or degraded to a point that the interior is no longer viable. In particular, the Mews, a large multiuse structure presents a storefront façade that has been the face of the center of town for more than 100 years. Pictures are included. Both of these buildings formerly contained affordable rental units.

Additionally there are two Marina facilities in need a infrastructure improvements. One is a Restaurant and Marina facility, which due to its location on the west side of town, has been battered for years by storm waves and is in a serious state of disrepair. As a seasonal business, dependent on tourism and with reduced marina rentals due to the economy, the owner realizes the need for infrastructure improvements to salvage this local's favorite but also lacks the ability to balance the cost of improvements with the potential income. There is a second Marina facility located at the gateway to the Historic District that has struggled through the recent economic downfall and although they have acquired building permits for some improvements, there is still major work needed to save the historic structure which has been severely damaged by continual tidal flooding. Pictures included.

The area that Oxford excels in is public services. The higher than average property assessments provide a sufficient tax base to provide excellent services to the citizens beyond what would normally be provide for a similar size community. Administrative staff has an open door policy and is available to meet with and assist citizens and business owners, with building permitting, FEMA regulations, Critical Areas regulations, and potential business opportunities. The Public Works Department focuses on continual rolling maintenance plans for all town infrastructure, parks and shorelines are maintained, roads and stormwater infrastructure is monitored and repaired as needed, trash pick-up includes special pick-ups for leaves, brush, debris and weekly curbside recycling. 24 hours police service protects public and property along with performing many good will tasks. The staff is invested in the community, understanding their value to the success and happiness of its citizens.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(2) Describe the Area's land use/zoning make-up (residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use). Is the current land use or zoning conducive to revitalization investment? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

Oxford Zoning includes six different commercial zoning categories, carefully structured to provide the necessary zoning make-up to allow for and promote the flexible maritime industry and unique small commercial components that have historically existed. Four of these commercial zoning categories allow for mixed use. It is also worth noting that the Historic District Residential Zoning allows for the up to three Apartments within a historic structure; Bed and Breakfast operations including up to six rooms; and Home Offices for professionals, doctors, lawyers, etc.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

3) Describe strengths and weaknesses in basic features of community quality-of-life. For instance, is crime an issue for this SC Area? What is the condition and quality of educational choices available to the community? Are artistic, cultural, or community resources, events or facilities within or accessible to residents in the proposed SC Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Community quality of life is Oxford's strongest asset. As a quiet, crime free, affluent community, with ready access to art and culture, along with land and water recreation, Oxford has no problem enticing retirees and second home owners. There is a desire in the community to support an influx of younger families, but this has proven difficult. The county schools are well rated, and the highly rated elementary school is just 10 miles away, but with the older median age in the community and the many services that cater to this aging population, there does not appear a sufficient attraction to bring young families to the area.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

C. Natural Resources and Environmental Impact: Strengths and Weaknesses

(1) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the community's "natural environment." in or near the Sustainable Community Area. What is the current condition of key natural resources - lands, air, water, watersheds, tree canopy, other? If the community is located in a coastal zone, what risks might the community be subject to associated with climate induced sea level rise? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford's natural environment is a fragile peninsula, border by Town Creek to the east and the Tred Avon along the west, which feeds into the Choptank River watershed and eventually the Chesapeake Bay. Most street ends drain to a grassy park area before reaching the river or creek, but there are still some tide gates and culverts that feed both stormwater and back-flowing tidal water directly into the waters.

The town itself consists of fairly dense housing, tree-lined streets and, based on the strict lot coverage restrictions, plenty of greenery. There is significant citizen interest in preserving the environment and maintaining older trees and planting new is a priority.

Virtually all of Oxford lies within the Critical Areas 1000-foot overlay, with the more restrictive 100-foot shoreline management buffer along most of the town's incorporated boundary. Although Critical Areas designates a majority of the area as Intensely Developed Areas without a coverage limit, the town zoning places an Oxford self-imposed coverage limit of 40% to maintain a greener environment and provide natural filtration of runoff.

A majority of the town is located in the 100-year flood plain and the town works closely with FEMA representatives from the Maryland Department of the Environment's Emergency Management in performing Flood Plain Management. The town administrator is a Certified Flood Plain Manager and as such works closely with all residents to assist with building elevations and flood protections. The town's recently updated Flood Plain Management Ordinance carries the more restrictive freeboard requirement of 3 foot, in order to allow citizens to elevate new and raised homes as high as possible.

Concerns regarding the possibility of sea level rise, increased precipitation and land subsidence are foremost in the minds of Oxford's leaders and citizens and for this reason the town is deeply engaged in studies and preparations for the potential impacts, which for the community are a serious threat.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(2) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of any current efforts to reduce the community's "carbon footprint" or impact on the environment. Is recycling (commercial or residential) available to minimize waste? Are there current efforts to encourage the purchase and availability of fresh local food and other local products and services to the community? Describe any current energy or water conservation efforts that may be underway. If the community has not implemented one of the above initiatives, has the community identified a need or interest to pursue these or other efforts to reduce environmental impact, for instance through the new Sustainable Maryland Certified initiative? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford leaders and citizens strive to be stewards of the environment, incorporating many initiatives to reduce their carbon footprint. The most recent effort was the successful launch of a curbside recycling program. The town struggled for many years with the most effective way to collect recycled materials, while preserving the "employment" of a long time local African American family business, one of the few surviving small trash collection businesses on the shore. Moving to curbside recycling would have reduced their services and threatened their livelihood. With some clever negotiating and educating, it was possible to assist this company in providing both curbside trash and recycle pickup, allowing the town to maintain the vendor while also providing curbside recycling to their citizens. Currently the town is diverting at least 50% of its trash to single stream recycling.

A second effort the town has recently undertaken, in connection with its Stormwater Management and Shoreline Protection efforts, is the implementation of rain barrels on as many rooftops as possible. The town with assistance from local non-profit organizations has spent the last two years educating the public on the benefits of rain barrels, including installation on town buildings and prompting the use of them on new construction as part of stormwater management plans. This initiative has a twofold benefit, reduction in quick runoff, allowing for natural filtration in flower beds and the added benefit of reducing the initial amount of rainwater that runs into the streets after a heavy rain fall, allowing rain to drain off and minimizing local stormwater flooding. The town will continue to promote the use of rain barrels.

The town recently acquired grant assistance and implemented the replacement of 90% of the previous light fixtures in its government facilities with environmentally friendly LED lighting. The environmental equivalency of this effort is a reduction of 12,246 lbs of CO2 annually.

The town is very interested in the Sustainable Maryland Certified initiative, has investigated the requirements and intends to pursue the project at the completion of this application.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(3) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the jurisdiction's current stormwater management practices and how these may affect the proposed SC Area. Is redevelopment and retrofitting of infrastructure an issue or opportunity in this SC Area? Stormwater runoff is a significant source of pollution to Maryland's streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Buildings constructed before 1985 have little or no stormwater controls, and development between 1985 and 2010 have some controls. Updated stormwater regulations passed by Maryland's General Assembly in 2010 require that development and redevelopment projects utilize stringent stormwater controls. Sustainable Community Areas may have opportunities for redevelopment practices that can reduce stormwater flows. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford has found itself on the forefront of this topic, undertaking an extensive Stormwater Task Force initiative implemented through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation tech assistance request. The initial research was prompted by citizen concerns regarding stormwater and tidal water flooding. With assistance from the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center, the town leaders and citizens became immersed in the process. Below is a summary of the findings, recommendations and goals. A full copy of the study will be submitted with the application.

Oxford's Stormwater Infrastructure

Oxford's stormwater system consists of pipes, culverts, swales, rain gardens, rain barrels, outfalls, biobags, and tide gates that work together to convey or store stormwater and minimize pollution loading.

The stormwater system, which is separate from the sewage system, is based on gravity flow and relies on an elevation gradient to drain water to outfalls. The low-lying nature of the town and tidal influence diminish this elevation gradient and necessitate tide gates. Tide gates are currently installed in four of the town's 15 outfalls (primarily the low-elevation outfalls) where they are supposed to prevent high tides from entering pipes, backing-up the system, and corroding metal pipes (i.e., due to salt-water corrosion).

Much of the stormwater system was put in place 50-plus years ago and there are components of the system to which the town does not have accurate records including the exact location, age, and condition of many of the town's pipes and culverts. Most of the town's stormwater infrastructure is located in the Historic District, the South Morris Street area, and Jack's Point with notable congestion around the Town Creek headwaters (i.e., at the Causeway) and in the northeast corner of the Historic District (i.e., Bank, Tilghman, Mill Streets). These locations coincide with flooding "hot" or trouble spots. It should also be noted that a number of culverts and pipes in Oxford have become pitched uphill and are unable to effectively convey water as the result of land subsidence in parts of town.

Recommendations:

- Adopt a more effective stormwater budget
- Account for projected sea level rise
- Establish a utility as part of a blended financing strategy
- Designate an appropriate utility purpose and label
- Design a utility structure and reserve fund

Goals:

- Raise topic awareness
- Identify, inspect and map all stormwater infrastructure
- Develop a Stormwater Master Plan
- Make the Capital Improvement Plan a component of the annual budget
- Institute a process to track and assess the stormwater system and program implementation
- Develop and deliver relevant stormwater management information to property owners

The Town has completed all the above recommendations within the last year and is currently working with town engineers to create an in depth inventory of the current infrastructure, while also working with technical assistance from MDE Coast Smart and NOAA to evaluate possible vulnerabilities due to climate change.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

D. Economic Conditions & Access to Opportunity: Strengths and Weaknesses

(1) Describe the jurisdiction's current economic strengths and weaknesses. For example, are there distinct economic drivers in the area or region that will affect access to job opportunities and the progress of the SC Plan? What are the main barriers to the Area's economic competitiveness? What is the current level of broadband access available to serve residents, businesses and public facilities? What efforts are currently in place to increase worker skills and employment? Describe trends in employment rates and business formation.

(Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The most prevalent barriers to economic competitiveness for Oxford are its current position as a retirement and second home community, its high property assessments, the limited area for infill or new growth and the very high cost of meeting federal and state regulations and mandates for maritime industries and waterfront properties.

Oxford does have access to DSL and broadband providing sufficient services for small businesses, home offices and telecommuting opportunities. This asset is attractive to second home owners as they can continue to "work" while in their summer homes.

Most employment within the community is either marine, service or construction related, with a majority of the workers traveling from outside the town. These employment opportunities are valued by workers living within 30 miles of the town, as it is a very reasonable commute for employment on the rural eastern shore.

The nature of a second home community with summer tourism is that most businesses operate seasonally, which has two negatives, there is not a steady influx of income for the business owners and there are many jobs that are seasonal only. Attracting year around residents to support year around businesses would be a tremendous positive for the economy.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(2) Describe the jurisdiction's housing market and access to affordable workforce housing. What are the trends in residential construction (rental and homeownership), homeownership rate, foreclosure rate and, property values. Describe how and whether your jurisdiction's prevailing housing costs - both homeownership and rental - are affordable to households below 120% AMI, 80% AMI and 50% AMI. What efforts are in place currently to house individuals, families and the disabled at or below the AMI levels described above? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford's value as a historic waterfront community generates high property values, which do produce a reasonable tax base allowing for more public services than generally found in a community of 574 homes, but the cost of most of the homes are considerably higher than nearby communities.

There are some sections of town that support smaller somewhat more affordable homes, but many are long-time residents, not as many of these properties are offered for sale, and there does appear to be a more recent trend towards foreclosure on these properties. A current online glance at the housing market for Oxford properties as of the date of this application shows, after removing two multimillion dollar properties, 8 homes advertised with an average sale price of \$615,000 and 11 properties in or preliminarily in foreclosure.

Opportunities for housing outside of ownership are found in the form of rental properties, which with monthly rentals between \$700 and \$1000 are normal for the surrounding areas. There are not a significant number of rentals, with approximately 30 rental units and 30 rental homes. What is significant in these numbers is that many of the rental units are extensions of small commercial businesses in town. Nearly all the historic storefronts house upstairs or back yard rental apartments and support of these businesses also supports the affordable housing opportunities.

II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION

(3) Describe the SC Area's demographic trends (with respect to age, race, household size, household income, educational attainment, or other relevant factors). (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

According to the 2010 Census, the total population for the Town of Oxford was 651, down from the 771 in the 2000 census, a loss of 15% of the year around residents.

Under the age of 18: 53 - 8%
19 to 59 years of age: 260 - 40%
Over the age of 60: 338 - 52% Median age: 61 years

Total Population: 651

Owner Occupied Homes: 275 48%
Renter Occupied Homes: 63 11%
Seasonal/Recreational Homes: 178 31% > 41% of homes are vacant 8 months
Either for sale/rent or other: 58 10% out of the year

Total Housing units: 574

III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS

A. Organizational Structure:

Describe the Applicant's organizational structure. Specifically, which organizations are members in the Sustainable Communities Workgroup and who are the respective staff? Who are the leaders, and how will the Workgroup advisor or staff manage implementation of the SC Area Plan? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The Commissioners of Oxford are ultimately responsible for implementing the action plan, although they will rely strongly on the well-organized Oxford Business Association, who were participants in the Sustainable Communities Workgroup and will continue with implementation. The Town Administrator, Cheryl Lewis, was the lead on this initiative, pooling all resources and efforts into a finished product and will continue to be the lead as the program moves forward. Lewis has experience in many areas, including business management, accounting, computer networking, personnel management, public speaking, and 13 years of experience working in and with Maryland municipalities and State government. The administrator worked with the following groups and individuals in preparing the plan and this application:

Commissioners of Oxford Carole Abruzzese, President
 Gordon Graves, Commissioner
 Gordon Fronk, Commissioner

Oxford Business Association Judy Bixler, President (Oxford Bellevue Ferry)
 Marcia LoVerdi, OBA Administrator
 Phyllis Rambo, (Oxford Community Center)
 Joan Nubie-Miscall (Treasurer Chest Giftshop)
 Wendy Palmer (Pier Street/Latitudes Restaurants)
 Ian Fleming (Robert Morris Inn)
 Graham Norbury (Brewers Boat Yard)
 Jane McCarthy (Benson Mangold Real Estate)
 Kathy Harig (Mystery Loves Company Book Store)
 Ben Gibson (Sandaway Lodge)

Oxford Planning Commission David Baker
 James Reed
 Stephen Mroczek
 Ed Miller

Oxford Historic District Commission Thomas Costigan
 James Deerin
 Suzanne Litty
 Jennifer Stanley
 Patricia Ingram

Oxford Staff Cheryl Lewis, Town Administrator
 Scott Delude, Public Works Supervisor
 Chief Pat Maxwell, Oxford Police Dept.

Talbot County Paige Bethke, Economic Development
 Mark Cohoon, GIS Manager, Public Works

Citizens Leo Nolmeyer, Historian
 Ray Stevens, Benson Mangold Real Estate

III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS

B.Organizational Experience:

Describe the Applicant organization's past experience in administering revitalization plans and projects. Describe the roles of the members of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup, including their experience in implementing revitalization initiatives. What are the strengths and challenges of the capacity of these groups with respect to implementation of the SC Plan? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The Town of Oxford has successfully completed several initiatives recently including:

Working with the Department of Natural Resources and utilizing Waterway Improvement Funding the Town over a multiyear process successfully secured the necessary permitting and funding to completely rebuild the town dock, which offers transient boat slips for visiting county residents and traveling boaters.

Working with the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center the town, through multiple citizen meetings and community outreach, developed a Stormwater and Flood Management Study. The main recommendation resulting from this work was the implementation of a Stormwater Management and Shoreline Protection Utility and Fund. Through public support and input the Commissioners adopt this utility and with the blessing of the citizens established an additional tax to begin the planning and implementation of this program, becoming was is most likely the smallest jurisdiction to voluntarily create a Stormwater Utility and tax supported Fund.

Oxford Play Ball Dog Park - A citizen group approached the Commissioners requesting temporary use of an unused ballpark for a trial run of an off leash dog park. The trial was very successful, with the group monitoring the use and managing the area and with a public response that prompt the Commissioners to seek funding to establish a permanent dog park. Working with the citizen group the Town Administrator prepared and submitted an application to the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program. The efforts were rewarded with a recent award of funding and construction on town land will begin in the next 30 days.

Economic Revitalization maybe a new initiative for the small town, but this program will be implemented with the same dedication and passion shown for all projects in Oxford and its success will mean success for the participating members and the community as a whole.

The advantage of being a retirement community is the citizenry, including the participants above, come from many professional backgrounds, including business management, accounting, legal, military, contracting, construction, medical and environmental science. The professional resources within the community are one of its strongest assets and will be utilized to implement this program.

III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS

C. Public Input:

How did residents and other stakeholders in the community provide input to Action Plan described below in Section IV? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

In 2013 Ray Stevens, local resident and real estate agent, approached the Commissioners, representing several citizens and business owners who were concerned over the decline of the commercial district, and asked the Commissioners to attend a meeting to discuss the issues. A full house gathered in the Town Meeting Hall to discuss and debate possible responses and solutions to the decline of the commercial district and the resulting vacant storefronts. Foremost in this discussion was the need for action by the town on behalf of the citizens to seek opportunities for business support. Many of the initiatives identified in the current plan resulted from the discussions that took place at this meeting.

Building on this momentum, the Town Administrator, with the support of the Commissioners approached stakeholders in the community to formulate an action plan. These objectives were identified and discussed at Commissioners meetings, Oxford Business Association meetings, and Oxford Planning and Oxford Historic Commission meetings. Recommendations and information was also solicited from Talbot County Economic Director Paige Bethke.

The Oxford Comprehensive Plan was referenced throughout this application as it was prepared by and represents the views and desires of the citizens, and is consider the planning voice of the town.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The Sustainable Community Action Plan (SC Plan or Plan) is meant to be a multi-year investment strategy - a strategic set of revitalization initiatives and projects that local partners believe will increase the economic vitality and livability of their community, increased prosperity for local households and improved health of the surrounding environment. The Plan should be flexible enough to be updated regularly and renewed every five years as the community envisions new goals. The priority initiatives and projects in the SC Plan should improve the livability of community places -- residential, commercial, or other public or private properties - and create new work, retail, recreational and housing opportunities for residents. These projects should also reduce the environmental impact of the community through water and energy resource conservation and management strategies. In this way, the Plan can be a road map for local stakeholders as well as State agencies to work together to create a more a sustainable and livable community.

A. Supporting existing communities & reducing environmental impacts.

(1) A community's approach to Smart Growth generally includes two inter-related areas of focus: encouraging reinvestment and growth in existing communities; and, discouraging growth that degrades natural resources, and farms and rural landscapes. Broadly describe your jurisdiction's Smart Growth approach and any significant accomplishments made over the last decade or so. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The guiding principal for the Town of Oxford as defined in their Comprehensive Plan is as follows:

Preserve the current unique small town character of Oxford, strictly regulating and controlling future expansion, while maintaining its historic neighborhoods, its commercial areas, its recreational facilities, its environmentally sensitive areas, its economic stability, and its diversity.

POPULATION - Preferred growth should be focused within the existing corporate boundaries of the Town so that both public facilities and approved land uses remain adequate to support a diverse population.

NATURAL RESOURCES - Protect the natural resources and sensitive environmental features in and around Oxford and to encourage their proper utilization.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Encourage and preserve a sound economy, including the hospitality industry, maritime-based services and boatyards, to maintain an economic base that is responsive to the needs of Oxford's population and provides a strong tax base for the town.

PUBLIC SERVICES - Provide, in an efficient and professional manner, an adequate level of those services, facilities, and utilities, which are normally provided by local governments of similar scale for the safety, health, and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

HOUSING Maintain Oxford's tradition of neighborhoods containing well-maintained, single-family owner occupied residential properties and preserve the integrity of the historically significant structures. Provide the opportunity for affordable housing to support the delivery of public services.

TRANSPORTATION - Endeavor to keep Oxford free of all types of vehicular congestion and to provide safe and easy pedestrian and bicycle access to all parts of the community.

LAND USE - Maintain a planned pattern of development within the Town's existing corporate boundaries and in any land that may be annexed that is compatible with both the efficient utilization of land and water and the Town's traditional neighborhood character.

CULTURAL - Support, protect and enhance Oxford's cultural and historic heritage and maintain a balance of cultural activities and resources appropriate to residents of all ages, national origins, and economic levels.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION - Work cooperatively with Talbot County, the State of Maryland and other entities, including neighboring communities, to provide Oxford residents with cost-effective services including police and fire protection, emergency medical services and road maintenance and repair.

FISCAL - Conservatively and responsibly manage the Town's revenues and expenditures to maintain a favorable balance between those revenues and the expenditures necessary to meet the community's needs.

RECREATION - Enhance the public open space and existing parks to encourage their continued use by members of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies approximately 64 infill lots with potential for development, but clearly states this is an aggressive number as it anticipates subdivision of privately held large landscaped residential lots, which is very unlikely to happen. The mapped growth area, as identified in the Town and County Comprehensive Plans, includes areas that are constrained by wetlands and critical areas regulations, with the largest portion of this area having recently been placed in an easement by the County and currently under design as an 86-acre passive park. This park area, along with the wetland component on the opposite side of State Road 333, creates a virtually impassable greenbelt, presenting a natural boundary for the town. Per the Comprehensive Plan, there is one remaining 12-acre parcel that could be developed in the future, but with Maryland Critical Areas LDA designation, it would still be limited to 50 or less homes. These restraints clearly emphasizes the need for focus on redevelopment within the town to strengthen the sustainability of the community.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) Describe any major investments in community infrastructure -water, stormwater, sewer, sidewalk, lighting, etc. -- that must be undertaken in order to improve the readiness or competitiveness of the proposed SC Area for private investment and compliance (if applicable) with TMDL regulations. Addressing the stormwater during redevelopment can reduce the pollution entering our streams and contribution to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Investments in infrastructure, generally, can be an important catalyst for new private investment in the community. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The Town of Oxford supports its infrastructure with a small yet creative Public Works Department that monitors and maintains all town infrastructure, including annual inspection and maintenance and a long term Capital Improvement Plan to identify and address future infrastructure needs. Recent infrastructure investments and planned investments include the following:

Streets - The town implemented a rolling street improvement plan within the last 5 years as part of its Capital Improvement Plan, setting aside funding in each budget year to resurface roads and replace water mains at the same time with the goal of systematically improving the aged infrastructure.

Sidewalks - Throughout the town, historic brick sidewalks line many of the streets, in a variety of designs and conditions. Previous efforts at replacing the sidewalks have produced very costly project initiatives that have failed at some point in the process. In 2014 it was determined, utilizing local skilled brick workers, that maintaining the historic sidewalks on an annual basis of spot repairs reusing and relaying the historic bricks would make it possible to preserve this unique historic element, while also improving the usability of the sidewalks. Designated funding is now included in the annual budget to address prioritized sections of sidewalk each year.

Water - Along with maintaining the water main infrastructure as mentioned previously, the town has recently incorporated an Arsenic Reduction System into its water service facilities, per recent EPA mandates. The requirements for this improvement have been and will continue to be a burden on the citizens as the debt for the improvement, along with the extensive cost of the replacement filter media are substantial. The town is currently working with engineers to investigate possible alternative filter media to reduce this cost.

Wastewater - The town currently utilizes a lagoon-based water treatment plant, which was originally constructed in 1963 and upgraded in 1981. Although not yet mandated, the town opted to undertake the possibility of upgrading to a BNR plant, with consideration of ENR. Utilizing a 2007 feasibility study, which was updated in 2012, the town approached USDA and MDE for possible funding. Through a cooperative Federal and State application process the town currently has full funding in place to upgrade to a state of the art Enhanced Nutrient Removal system, which is currently in the design phase. In anticipation of this upgrade, annual increases in rates were implemented in 2012 to offset the upcoming cost.

These infrastructure improvements absolutely create additional cost for the individual users, but through responsible actions of the Commissioners, the recent successes in receiving substantial grant funding for the sewer project will certainly lessen what could have potentially been considerably more costly to the residential and business community had the town waited for a State mandate to prompt an upgrade.

Stormwater - In 2012 Oxford took on the huge initiative of identifying its vulnerabilities to increasing high water risks with an application to Maryland DNR for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation supported technical assistance grant. This award kicked started the communities efforts to identify issues, prioritize improvements and plan for future impacts. The initial findings are available in the EFC Stormwater/Flood Management Financing Study of 2013. Oxford has adopted the recommendations from the study and is currently in the planning stages to provide a Sustainable Stormwater and Tidal Water System for the long-term sustainability of its community.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) Describe policies, initiatives or projects that the community will undertake or expand in order to reduce the SC Area's impact on the environment. Examples include but are not limited to: conservation or management of stormwater through retrofitting of streets and by-ways (Green Streets, rain gardens, etc.); retrofitting of facilities and homes for energy conservation; implementation of "green" building codes and mixed-use zoning; recycling of waste; clean-ups of watersheds; and, encouragement of "Buy Local" approaches that benefit local suppliers and food producers. A comprehensive menu of such actions may be found through the nonprofit Sustainable Maryland Certified initiative. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

All local codes have been updated within the last few years to support environmentally sound construction

- Oxford Stormwater Management Ordinance 2011
- Oxford Flood Plain Management Ordinance 2013
- Oxford Stormwater Management and Shoreline Protection Utility and Fund 2014

The following initiatives were implemented in support of reducing environmental impacts and continue as ongoing projects within the town:

- Living Shorelines, Waterfront Pocket Parks and Soft Recreational Landings
- Rain Barrel and Stormwater Retention education and implementation for both public and private properties
- Curbside Recycling program coordinated through the locally owned long time trash collectors
- Government provided land for Community Gardens
- Utilization of Grassy areas for overflow parking
- Support of private initiatives and improvements on both private and public property

Additionally, as recommended in the 2013 EFC Stormwater and Flood Management Financing Study, Oxford has undertaken a comprehensive study of its Stormwater and Shoreline Infrastructure to beginning the prioritizing of capital improvements to support the Sustainability of the Community in reference to Stormwater and Tidal Water impacts.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford Local Government:

- The Commissioners of Oxford
- The Oxford Planning Commission
- The Oxford Historic District Commission
- The Oxford Parks and Recreation Committee
- The Oxford Policy Department

Oxford Local Non-Profit Organizations:

- The Oxford Business Association
- The Oxford Community Center
- The Oxford Museum
- The Oxford Library
- The Oxford Fire Department

County Government:

- The Talbot County Department of Economic Development
- The Talbot County Department of Tourism

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

B. Valuing communities and neighborhoods -- building upon assets and building in amenities:

(1) What are the key assets that exist in the community upon which the Plan's projects and initiatives will build? Assets may include physical assets such as parks and historic structures and also civic and economic assets such as employers, educational institutions, and cultural organizations and activities. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Examples of key historic assets within the community

- Oxford Historic District - unique mix of homes spanning a 200 plus-year period, all within a walkable community
- The Port of Oxford's 330-year history, including its Maritime Industries: Marinas, Boat Building, and working Watermen
- Oxford's Unique Historic Business Community, Oxford-Bellevue Ferry, Oxford Market and Shops, Oxford's many Historic Inns and Taverns

Examples of cultural activities and recreational opportunities within the community:

- Oxford's Waterfront Parks, Beaches, Docks and unprecedented scenery
- Oxford's Recreational fields, soccer, basketball, baseball, tennis, walking tracks, children's play areas and the soon to be completed new dog park
- The recently renovated Oxford Community Center - a historic school building, providing education, arts and entertainment year around
- Oxford Day Celebration, Oxford Christmas on the Creek, Oxford's Kids Summer Camp, Oxford's Regattas and other annual events celebrating Arts, Food, Water and History

Examples of successful reuses of historic buildings within the Historic Commercial Center:

- The Oxford Book Store - example of good reuse of a historic bank building
- The Oxford Market - example of quaint traditional use serving residents and tourist
- The Oxford Museum - a former grocery/confectionary now housing Oxford's treasures
- The Oxford Library - a former 'decoy carving' shop in the early 1900s
- The Treasure Chest - example of a traditional historic storefront
- Benson Mangold Real Estate - example of reuse of old storefront as a walk in office

Examples of key employers and employment opportunities within the community:

- Oxford's 8 privately owned full time Marina and Maritime Industries
- Oxford's Federal Employers: US Coast Guard and the Oxford Cooperative Lab

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) What policies, initiatives or projects will reuse or enhance the historical assets, traditional business districts/Main Streets and cultural resources of the community? What actions will reinforce your community's authentic "sense of place" and historic character? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Improvements and or acquisition of historic buildings within the Town's Historic Commercial Center:

The Mews - potential multiple storefronts, rental apartments & condominium units upstairs. This unique structure, which has been privately held and vacant for many years, is the central focal point of the historic commercial center and is a crucial element of the history of Oxford. There is public support for action to be taken to acquire or promote the acquisition of this building to save the façade, while also strengthening the commercial center with a multiuse venture. Barnaby House - 1770, oldest Oxford Private Residence on its original foundation. This home has been vacant and for sale for many years and public acquisition to prevent the decline of the structure is under consideration. Uses: meeting or rental space, historic tours, or bed and breakfast.

The Fowler Building - potential for storefront, rental apartments, condominium units. Privately held, partially renovated structure, which has been vacant for many years. Funding support is needed for the completion of the renovations.

The Oxford Yacht Agency/Marina - operating marina at entry to Historic with a need for façade and infrastructure improvements.

The Oxford Market & Deli - the only year around operating market providing necessities to the citizens and tourist. Support to continue this crucial operation, along with support for façade and infrastructure improvements is a priority for the town.

The Robert Morris Inn - operating as an inn, restaurant, and tavern, is a historic structure with portions of the building dating back to 1710. Support of this year around operation, sitting on a prominent waterfront corner located near the town dock is a priority for the town.

Nichols House, Ruffle Duck, Oxford Inn, and Sandaway Lodge are several historic structures that support accommodations within the town. Supporting the tourism industry is crucial to the economic survival of the businesses. Support for all privately owned historic structures:

The town would like to assist current and future owners of historic homes, as a liaison, with loan and grant funding for the restoration and preservation of their structures.

Continued support and improvements to our Waterfront Businesses:

All Marinas and Waterfront operations - support and financial assistance is necessary with the many State and Federal mandatory regulations in order to reduce the financial burdens that endanger the continued operation of these cultural uses, along with funding support for the substantial infrastructure cost these facilities are faced with.

Support the eight (8) full service Marinas, along with several supporting Maritime businesses, which is a substantial number for such a small community. These businesses contribute to the economy of the town and are the largest employers, while also representing the historic waterfront operations dating back hundreds of years.

Oxford Bellevue Ferry - America's oldest privately run ferry, carries people, bicycles, and automobiles across the Tred Avon. The ferry is a historic and cultural feature that is central to the town and support of continued operations is a priority.

The Pier Street Marina and Restaurant - operating restaurant with a need for bulkhead, dock, and building improvements.

Continued support of the small Industrial Park Oxford Commissioners provided land for in the 1980s, allowing for small industrial opportunities to support the marine industry. Continued support of this operation is necessary to avoid vacancies and to provide local employment opportunities.

Continued Support of and collaboration with federal facilities:

US Coast Guard Small Boat Station

The Cooperative Oxford Laboratory (COL), combining the efforts of NOAA, Maryland DNR and the US Coast Guard

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) Describe policies, initiatives or projects that will increase community access to green spaces, parks and other amenities? A community can gain social and physical benefits from access to a healthy natural environment. The inclusion of complete streets, trails, green space, parks and trees contribute to the character and health of a community. Examples might include improvements to the tree canopy by planting street trees, improving local neighborhood streams, or reusing a vacant lot for a new community park or playground.*(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

Oxford prides itself on its Green Spaces, many of which have existed as designated open space since the town was laid out in the 1600's, including the Town Park and the Strand Beach. The town has possession of every street ending that touches water and maintains beach or grassy shorelines for public use in all of these areas.

The town has utilized grant funding to create two living shorelines and will be seeking additional assistance to continue to convert areas to living shorelines in the future, with the next identified location being the Strand Town Parking Lot, which abuts Town Creek sitting between two private bulkheads. The living shoreline will be designed to allow for a soft, natural kayak launch area, while preventing erosion in the areas that meet the private bulkheads.

The town works with the citizens to encourage tree plantings on all building plans, even those that do not have a requirement for such, along with supporting citizen efforts with tree plantings on both private and public lands.

As part of the recent Stormwater initiative the town has begun the process of converting park and street ditches into bio-retention swales where possible to improve stormwater runoff while also providing additional 'retention' areas during major rain events.

The soon to be constructed county owned Oxford Gateway Park, an 86 - acre passive park with an emphasis on the wetland construction and educational components, will include a large series of walking trails. Talbot County actively engaged the officials and citizens of Oxford in the design process and have incorporated access to the park from within the town, allowing for an extension of the towns community access to green space.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford Local Government:

- The Commissioners of Oxford
- The Oxford Planning Commission
- The Oxford Historic District Commission
- The Oxford Parks and Recreation Committee

Oxford Local Non-Profit Organizations:

- The Oxford Museum
- The Oxford Business Association
- The Oxford Community Center
- The Oxford Garden Club

Talbot County

- Talbot County Commissioners
- Talbot County Department of Parks and Recreation

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

C. Enhancing economic competitiveness

(1) What economic development policies, initiatives or projects will improve the economy through investments in small businesses and other key employment sectors? What economic development and business incentives will you build upon or implement as part of the SC Plan? Examples could include but are not limited to: green-taping for expedited project application review; permitting and inspection; job training; business tax credits; and, revolving loan funds. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The following objectives have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan as important for economic development:

- Encourage and maintain a level of commercial activity primarily oriented towards meeting the needs of Oxford's population and secondarily towards serving the needs of persons from areas outside the Town's corporate boundaries. Easton and Cambridge are to be regarded as the providers of the major shopping and employment centers for Oxford's population, but Oxford employment opportunities are to be encouraged.
- Encourage the moderate expansion of the town's hospitality industry, such as restaurants and tourism related commercial uses, as well as boat building and marine maintenance and repair industries and other water oriented commercial activity.
- Encourage the flexible use of existing residential buildings and accessory structures to facilitate home occupations and home offices that are compatible with adjacent residential uses.
- Encourage high tech, computer-based businesses and related employment opportunities.
- Within the framework of this Plan, the Town should maintain a flexible attitude toward potential new businesses locating in the Town. In that regard, the Town should consider implementing flexible public parking standards, such as waivers, shared parking arrangements, etc., where appropriate.

The Commissioners of Oxford, in effort to support commercial revitalization, are instituting a "Community Revitalization Fund" which will allow interested parties to contribute to the revitalization of the community, assisting the local government in building funds that can be utilized as leverage for state and federal grants and loan programs. The fund will be set up to receive general donations, while also allowing for donations and endowments to specific projects within the community. If funds are given with a specific project or recipient identified, those funds will remain earmarked for that project on the donor's behalf.

In support of business development and success, the town does not charge the standard business personal property tax or charge a business license fee. Additionally the Comprehensive Plan states that the town should maintain a flexible attitude toward potential new businesses locating in the town. In that regard, the town should consider implementing flexible public parking standards, such as waivers, shared parking arrangements, etc., where appropriate. The town staff puts a high priority on assisting both current and new business owners with any permitting and inspection needs.

The town's goal in applying for Sustainable Communities Designation is for the purpose of creating opportunities for businesses to access tax credits, business loans and grant funding. The town will build on these opportunities to enhance the business environment and support the business community.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) What workforce development policies, initiatives or projects will increase access to jobs and economic opportunity for residents in the SC Area? Do you have a goal for job creation? Are green jobs an opportunity in the jurisdiction or SC Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford small commercial businesses and marinas provide employment opportunities within the town. With virtually no ability to draw large employers and no available land for the same, the success of these businesses is vital to the economy of the community and crucial that there be support in place to maintain these businesses in order to continue to provide employment opportunities. Oxford's efforts are directed at supporting and maintaining its current maritime and small commercial businesses.

Oxford Comprehensive Plan supports encouraging and preserving a sound economy, including the hospitality industry, maritime-based services and boatyards, to maintain an economic base that is responsive to the needs of Oxford's population and provides a strong tax base for the town.

In 1993, the Oxford Business Association was formed. The Oxford Business Association (OBA) functions as a liaison between the business establishments and the Town and has worked to promote legislation to better integrate businesses into the community, as well as Talbot County. The OBA is well integrated and active in all aspects of the town, participating in all town events, taking advantage of all opportunities to promote Oxford and its business community. The OBA meets regularly with the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Office of Economic Development and Bureau of Tourism.

In the 1980's, the Town established a four lot Commercial Industrial Park District. The intent of this zone was to "provide a controlled and planned area for certain commercial, industrial and maritime industrial businesses which have limited effect upon the surrounding land."

Historically significant and important to the underlying economic activity of Oxford is the marine trades and boat building industry, which provide employment opportunities, both seasonal and fulltime and support wages above the mean hourly wage of \$14.34 for the Upper Shore. The concentration of skilled craftsmen provide opportunity for mentoring. The recent economic downturn has greatly affect the recreational boating industry impacting not only the marine industries in Oxford, but also the restaurants, inns and retail shops which all rely on tourism. Continued support for this industry is a priority for the town, as it is the key to all other employment opportunities and the economic success for the community.

The Commissioners of Oxford, realizing the importance of supporting the historic marine industry of working the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, have taken a supportive stand utilizing town owned dock space to assist local waterman in continuing this traditional work. The town has 43 town slips available for rent, giving priority to watermen at a substantially reduced annual rate, also maintaining the dock facilities in a manner that best serves the waterman, giving attention to their need for easy access to parking and sufficient space for unloading their catch, along with listening to their concerns and assisting where possible.

Federal: The US Coast Guard, with 16 servicemen/women providing maritime security and support. The Cooperative Oxford Laboratory, a collaboration between Maryland DNR and the NOAA, employees 42 scientist and technicians. The Lab provides access to the latest environmental science and opportunity for local collaboration. Oxford's recent award of a technical support grant from the Maryland CoastSmart/NOAA initiative will encourage this coordination as Oxford seeks information regarding vulnerability to the threats posed by future sea level rise and climate change impacts. The resulting Stormwater Management and Shoreline Protection CIP will provide many opportunities for 'green' jobs as the town works towards better management of its impact to local waters, while improving the environmental sustainability of its community.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) Describe whether the Sustainable Community will be impacted by the Base Re-alignment and Closure (BRAC) activities in Maryland. If impacted, how do the initiatives and projects in your Plan complement BRAC-related growth? (If not applicable, all ten points will be assessed based on answers to questions 1, 2, and 4) (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

N/A

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford Local Government:

- The Commissioners of Oxford
- The Oxford Planning Commission
- The Oxford Historic District Commission

Oxford Local Non-Profit Organizations:

- The Oxford Business Association
- The Oxford Community Center
- The Oxford Museum
- The Oxford Library
- The Oxford Fire Department

County Government:

- The Talbot County Department of Economic Development

State and Federal Government:

- Maryland Department of Environment/DNR
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

D. Promoting access to quality affordable housing.

(1) What housing policies, initiatives or projects will expand housing choices - rental and homeownership -- for people of a range of ages, incomes, and also for disabled individuals? How will these actions address the current housing conditions and needs noted in Section II? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

The Comprehensive Plan promotes maintaining Oxford's tradition of neighborhoods containing well-maintained, single-family owner occupied residential properties and preserving the integrity of the historically significant structures, while supporting the opportunity for affordable housing to encourage Oxford's youth and lower income groups to remain in the town.

With limited opportunity for new development, emphasis is placed on maintaining quality affordable housing. Although the main housing stock in town consists of highly assessed historic waterfront properties, there are rental opportunities connected to many of the commercial properties. Building codes support housing units within commercial properties, allowing for additional income for businesses, which is especially beneficial in maintain year around income for seasonal businesses. Nearly all the commercial storefronts in Oxford contain upstairs or backyard apartments providing affordable rental units within the attractive historic district. The building codes also allow for a managers apartment on marine properties in order to provide suitable workforce housing for these operations. The importance of sustaining these small businesses is even more relevant when given consideration to the number of affordable housing units they provide.

Additionally the building code allows for the division of larger homes in the historic district into up to three apartments. There are many buildings throughout town that support multiple housing units, although due to the historic district requirements requiring the exterior of the buildings keep a single-family appearance; this is not necessarily obvious to visitors to the community.

The town has provided land for affordable housing initiatives to support volunteer firefighters and currently maintains two of its own townhouse rental units to provide housing for town employees or members of the Coast Guard or Lab. The rental units have been successful and the town would consider future opportunities to acquire additional properties for this purpose.

In a recent effort, the town staff assisted an investor who purchased a duplex that had sustained substantial flood damage with the hopes of improving the property. With assistance and direction, the new owner was able to elevate the structure on a new foundation, adding porches, reconditioning the interior and exterior, creating two nice rental units. Because it was necessary to relocate one of the tenants during the improvements, the town staff expedite all permitting and inspecting to reduce the amount of time the tenant was displaced.

Most of the rental units mentioned rent for \$700 to \$1000 per month. The town also has several historic commercial structures that have been divided into condominiums. When these units are available for purchase, the prices are considerably less than the traditional single-family homes.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) Will these housing initiatives or projects increase access to transit or community walkability and/or decrease transportation costs? In other words, will the housing investments result in more people living near work or town centers, or able to more conveniently reach work, school, shopping and/or recreation? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

Oxford is a very small waterfront community in a large rural multi-county area. The entire town is walkable and people walk and bike throughout town, including those who have the opportunity to live and work in town. Supporting the local businesses who provide most of the rental stock in town, promotes the walkability of those employed in town.

The next closest employment centers or housing areas are 10 to 15 miles away and there is no actual transit system available. But, when you take into consideration that along with the businesses, the residents of the town support a large number of service workers, including landscapers, housekeepers, caretakers, electricians, plumbers and construction contractors, many of whom live outside of the town but within 30 miles, it becomes apparent that the employment engine created within the town allows people living in the more affordable housing located in the rural areas the ability to work closer to their homes. Promoting the employment opportunities within the town actually reduces commute times for workers, who might otherwise have to travel to more populated areas for employment.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) What is your goal for of number of units to be created of affordable workforce housing, rental and homeownership? What populations (by income or special needs) will benefit from this increased access to affordable housing? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

As previously stated, Oxford's efforts are directed at supporting and maintaining its current maritime and small commercial businesses. The same is true for affordable housing, supporting the businesses that provide these housing opportunities for the working population is crucial to the economic viability of the town. The opportunity for other alternatives to develop workforce housing, although very limited, is always a consideration of the town officials, including promoting the reuse of underutilized buildings for both rental and ownership.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford Local Government:

- The Commissioners of Oxford

- The Oxford Planning Commission

- The Oxford Historic District Commission

Oxford Local Non-Profit Organizations:

- The Oxford Business Association

- The Oxford Fire Department

County Government:

- The Talbot County Department of Economic Development

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

E. Support transportation efficiency and access.

(1) What policies, strategies and projects are envisioned to strengthen the transportation network that affects the proposed SC Area? How will these initiatives support transportation choices (including walking, bicycling, bus or rail transit, and carpooling) or otherwise promote an efficient transportation network that integrates housing and transportation land uses? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

As found in the Comprehensive plan The Town of Oxford is unique among Talbot County's incorporated towns in that it is located at the end point of a highway with all road access to and from the Town using one roadway, Route 333. This highway provides Oxford with access to Easton and the remainder of the county. Route 333 is constructed with wide paved shoulders that provide a travel lane for bicycles. Route 333 is a State Highway designated bike route. Generally, Route 333 (also known as Oxford Road) has one of the lowest accident rates for arterial roads in Talbot County. The Town will continue its efforts to promote a walkable and bike-able community, including its recent efforts to improve mobility on the historic brick sidewalks, which is supported through annual budgeted funds for restoration of trouble areas.

The town is currently in discussions with State Highway to elevate the section of Route 333 known as the "Causeway" in order to assure continued 24 hours access over this main artery of the town. With the threat of sea level rise it is anticipated that this area, which experiences tidal flooding on a regular basis, will become more of an issue for residents and commuting employees. As this flooding poses both an economic and an emergency threat to the community, the Commissioners have been investigating future solutions as part of their Stormwater Task Force Study. Recent work has produced a possible solution posed by a University of Maryland Landscape Architecture student, involving elevation of the roadway and adding culverts to allow tidal inflow in to a major series of stormwater retention areas to hold and filter water until the tide recedes. The student proposal was one of the projects in the "Design and Planning for Sea Level Change and Stormwater Issues on Maryland's Eastern Shore, a comprehensive approach to address the challenges faced by Oxford" submittal, which was awarded first place in Maryland Department of Planning's Sustainable Growth Challenge.

Similar to the issues Oxford experiences with the State Route 333, Oxford experiences frequent tidal flooding of its minor roads, greatly impacting the ability of residents to move about within the community and even more so, the ability of commuters to enter and leave in vehicles. This issue prompted the original effort of seeking assistance to gain the needed expertise to understand and address sea level rise, increased precipitation and increased frequency of flooding. Based on the initial Stormwater Task Force Study, the town citizens have authorized the collection of a utility tax to first acquire professional services to undertake an in-depth inventory of its stormwater and tidal water infrastructure and with this knowledge develop a long term Capital Improvement Plan for this infrastructure, addressing and prioritizing the actions necessary to support the sustainability of the town.

Oxford has spent the last three years, seeking expert assistance, collaborating with other government and non-profit efforts, building on forward thinking projects to strengthen the sustainability of the town and will leverage this work in the future as it searches for collaborative funding to accomplish these tasks so that this town's 330-year history can carry on into the future.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) If applicable, describe the SC Area's connection or proximity to transportation centers (e.g. Metro, MARC, and light rail stations) and describe opportunities for Transit - Oriented Development (TOD). Will Plan strategies and projects contribute to jobs/housing balance or otherwise provide a mix of land uses that can be expected to reduce reliance on single-occupancy automobiles? (If transit or TOD is not applicable in your community, all points in this section will be based on questions 1 and 3) *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

N/A

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

Oxford Local Government:

- Commissioners of Oxford
- Oxford Planning Commission
- Oxford Policy Department

Oxford/Talbot Non-Profit Organizations:

- Oxford Business Association
- Oxford Fire Department
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

County Government:

- Talbot County Council
- Talbot County Engineer
- Talbot County Emergency Services

State and Federal Government:

- Maryland State Highway Administration
- Maryland Department of Environment/DNR
- Maryland Department of Planning/Critical Areas
- Army Corps of Engineers
- National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NOAA)

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

F. Coordinating and Leveraging Policies and Investment

(1) What specific steps will the Sustainable Community Workgroup take to coordinate policies and funding streams to remove barriers to investment and maximize and increase funding in the proposed Sustainable Community Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

With this application, the Oxford Commissioners hope to open up opportunities for both public and private assistance. A matrix will be created, which identifies available opportunities and offers collaborative initiatives with stakeholders in order to provide assistance to both current and future businesses and property owners.

Local government administration will coordinate with state and federal agencies to identify ongoing opportunities and to assist local stakeholders in the necessary processes to obtain the available assistance

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(2) How is the proposed Sustainable Community Plan consistent with other existing community or comprehensive plans? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

As previously identified under Smart Growth, the guiding principal for the Town of Oxford as defined in their Comprehensive Plan is as follows:

Preserve the current unique small town character of Oxford, strictly regulating and controlling future expansion, while maintaining its historic neighborhoods, its commercial areas, its recreational facilities, its environmentally sensitive areas, its economic stability, and its diversity.

Section IV of this application contains the goals presented in the Comprehensive Plan. This application was prepared utilizing these goals and the guidance provided in the Comprehensive Plan, including the following objectives identified as important for economic development:

- Encourage and maintain a level of commercial activity primarily oriented towards meeting the needs of Oxford's population and secondarily towards serving the needs of persons from areas outside the Town's corporate boundaries. Easton and Cambridge are to be regarded as the providers of the major shopping and employment centers for Oxford's population, but Oxford employment opportunities are to be encouraged.
- Encourage the moderate expansion of the town's hospitality industry, such as restaurants and tourism related commercial uses, as well as boat building and marine maintenance and repair industries and other water oriented commercial activity.
- Encourage the flexible use of existing residential buildings and accessory structures to facilitate home occupations and home offices that are compatible with adjacent residential uses.
- Encourage high tech, computer-based businesses and related employment opportunities.
- Within the framework of this Plan, the Town should maintain a flexible attitude toward potential new businesses locating in the Town. In that regard, the Town should consider implementing flexible public parking standards, such as waivers, shared parking arrangements, etc., where appropriate.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

(3) How will the Plan help leverage and/or sustain more private sector investments? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The previously mentioned "Community Revitalization Fund" is being established to allow for private sector investment in the form of donations to support the many efforts identified in the Sustainability Plan. With many affluent residents, this fund will create the ability for interested parties to support the Historic Commercial District Businesses and the Historic Maritime Industries.

The funds raised in support of the identified efforts will assist in offsetting the many additional cost incurred in working with infrastructure that carries the burden of meeting Historic Guidelines, Flood Elevations, Critical Areas and Environmental requirements. With these identified additional cost it is very difficult to attract new business and investors to the community. The acceptance of Oxford's Sustainability Plan into the Maryland's Designated Sustainable Communities will further allow for leveraging of private sector investment in conjunction with available State grant and loan funds to both revitalize currently operating business and revitalize current vacant business properties.

The Sustainable Community Plan identifies specific opportunities for revitalization and infill development, allowing potential private sector investors new to the community to clearly understand the desires of the community, and providing investors' confidence in community support for identified projects.

V. PROGRESS MEASURES

For the Plan parts of section IV (A through F):

(1) List the specific outcomes that the Plan seeks to produce. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)

- Preserve the Town of Oxford and its 330-year history as a one of Maryland's first Port Towns
- Maintain and enhance the economic viability of the Town of Oxford
- Maintain and enhance the traditional Maritime Industries, including Boat Building and Maintenance
- Continue to support the historic tradition of Watermen who have made their living on the local waters
- Preservation and rehabilitation of historic residential and commercial structures
- Maintain and enhance small business opportunities serving citizens and tourist
- Encourage private sector investment in the community, its history and its commercial endeavors
- Preserve and encourage more diverse housing stock to provide affordable housing opportunities
- Encourage and attract year around homeowners and year around businesses
- Maintain community appropriate recreation facilities to keep and attract homeowners
- Maintain Oxford's cultural activities enhancing the quality of life for citizens and visitors
- Maintain and improve the environmental stability of the community, thorough policies, programs, and infrastructure improvements, including public education and outreach
- Plan and Prepare for future infrastructure needs of the community with regards to Climate Change

V. PROGRESS MEASURES

(2) And, list the specific benchmarks that will be used to measure progress toward these outcomes. *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

- Continue to track vacancies for both residential and business properties / Oxford Real Estate Agencies
- Annual review of the Plan identifying accomplishments and areas of need / Oxford Business Association
- Annual update of the Plan resulting from the Oxford Business Association review / Town Commissioners
- Annual review of the Town's Capital Improvement Plans to assure progress on infrastructure improvements and upgrades

REPLACE THIS PAGE WITH
LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT
RESOLUTIONS

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY APPLICATION
DISCLOSURE AUTHORIZATION AND CERTIFICATION**

The undersigned authorizes the Department of Housing and Community Development (the “Department”) to make such inquiries as necessary, including, but not limited to, credit inquiries, in order to verify the accuracy of the statements made by the applicant and to determine the creditworthiness of the applicant.

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.1983.18, the Department advises you that certain personal information is necessary to determine your eligibility for financial assistance. Availability of this information for public inspection is governed by Maryland’s Access to Public Records Act, State Government Article, Section 10-611 et seq. of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the “Act”). This information will be disclosed to appropriate staff of the Department or to public officials for purposes directly connected with administration of this financial assistance program for which its use is intended. Such information may be shared with State, federal or local government agencies, which have a financial role in the project. You have the right to inspect, amend, or correct personal records in accordance with the Act.

The Department intends to make available to the public certain information regarding projects recommended for funding in the Sustainable Community Plan. The information available to the public will include the information in this application, as may be supplemented or amended. This information may be confidential under the Act. If you consider this information confidential and do not want it made available to the public, please indicate that in writing and attach the same to this application.

You agree that not attaching an objection constitutes your consent to the information being made available to the public and a waiver of any rights you may have regarding this information under the Act.

I have read and understand the above paragraph. Applicant’s Initials: _____

Anyone who knowingly makes, or causes to be made, any false statement or report relative to this financial assistance application, for the purposes of influencing the action of the Department on such application, is subject to immediate cancellation of financial assistance and other penalties authorized by law.

The undersigned hereby certifies that the Sustainable Communities Plan or Project(s) proposed in this Application can be accomplished and further certifies that the information set herein and in any attachment in support hereof is true, correct, and complete to the best of his/her knowledge and belief.

Authorized Signature

Print Name and Title

Date